

Edinburgh 2010 process and theological education - the legacy of the world mission conference and the vision for ETE in the 21st century

Contribution for
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(A)

The centenary conference Edinburgh 2010 and the
global study process on world mission/theological
education in the 21th century



Edinburgh 1910 – origin of the global ecumenical movement

- 1200 delegates from 150 mission societies and churches, only 17 representatives from so-called „mission fields“
- Sense of urgency for world evangelization „the evangelization of the world in this generation“ (John R. Mott and J.H. Oldham)
- Protestant and anglosachson dominance, absence of roman-catholic and orthodox representatives
- 8 sections dealing with world mission priorities for the 20th century; focus on ecumenical unity for common world mission (section 8)
- Appointment of continuation committee which led to the launching of IRM (1912) and the formation of IMC in Lake Mohonk, NY (1921)
- Subsequent formation of Faith and Order Movement (1927 in Lausanne) and Universal Christian conference on Life and World (1925)

Edinburgh 1910 – emergence of a common concern for christian education

- Edinburgh 1910 as the culmination of the optimistic spirit of the great missionary enterprise of 19th century Christianity in the North-Atlantic. The assumption being that a goal like „evangelization of this world in one generation“ could be a common, feasible and practical short-term aim and „Christian forces“ around would be enough to be assembled for that purpose. It also was the still unchallenged assumption that countries in the East and the South had to gradually adapt and be upgraded to the systems of civilization, Christianization and education which were developed in the „Christian west“ (two different messages!)
- New attention to the importance of education: Key concept of „moral education of the people of the South“:
- “Moral education” referred to the religious and spiritual education of the masses in countries the South which only by education could be safeguarded against the negative side-effects of the encounter with western modernization and technological revolution for the understanding of that time: „One of the striking phenomena of the present hour is the worldwide recognition of the necessity of the moral, if not the religious, element in education – a recognition by no means confined to Christian nations, but found also among the Hindus of India, the Confucianists in China, and the statesmen and educators in Japan trained in the precepts of Bushido...With due recognition of the many elements of truth and value in the non-Christian systems of religion and ethics, we should nevertheless be faithless...if we did not at this time reaffirm our conviction that the education of the world demands for its highest and best developments of those elements of truth which are the peculiar contribution of Christianity to the world’s though and life.“(EW III, 368). Or also: „The impact of western civilization upon the peoples of Africa, with the disintegrating and often demoralizing influences that seem to accompany it, imposes on Christian nations, who have accepted responsibilities in relation to the native races, a binding obligation to provide a new, moral and religious foundation for social life in place of the old sanctions which have been destroyed.“(ebd. S. 379)
- Key vision of Edinburgh 1910 that religious education should be strengthened in order to help counterbalancing the ambivalent side-effects of western modernization for the countries of the South.

Edinburgh 1910 – emergence of a common concern for theological education

- Commission V in the Edinburgh 1910 world mission conference was dealing with questions of the „preparations of the missionaries“. It was the first time that the idea emerged and was articulated by a common Christian forum for the establishment of new forms of centralized and ‚ecumenical‘ education of future missionaries.
- Until Edinburgh 1910 the majority of missionaries were trained at seminary level, only in exceptional cases like Danish-Hällesche Mission in the 18. century missionaries were they also trained at an academic level.
- In reviewing existing mission seminaries and facilities for training, Edinburgh 1910 came to the conclusion that the education of missionaries needed to be drastically improved in terms of both a) language studies, b) history of religions and sociology of mission territories and c) in general principles of missionary work.
- Interdenominational cooperation of mission agencies for common training programmes for missionaries was seen as the priority for the future in Edinburgh 1910. Missionary training programmes were recommended to be upgraded academically to post-graduate levels and to take place mainly in „central missionary colleges“ (not as before just in regional denominational mission seminaries) which were to be foreseen in places like Shanghai, Madras, Calcutta, Beirut and Kairo and should be open to missionaries of all Christian denominations.
- These plans were visionary and revolutionary in their understanding of Christian education and theological education in particular. Without using the terminology yet this can be seen as the birthplace of a global initiative for centralized places of academic ecumenical theological education in various key centres outside the western world to train indigenous clergy and theological educators.
- The paved the way for the foundation of TEF in 1958 which was given birth to within the IMC.

After Edinburgh 1910 – different streams of commitment for ecumenical theological education

- 1946 founding of Bossey Ecumenical Institute as focal point for ecumenical programmes for theological education for clergy and lay people
- 1947 founding of *World Council of Christian Education* (originally World Sunday School Convention which existed since 1889)
- 1958 foundation of Theological Education Fund in London Bromley with three decisive goals focussing on
 - *Quality* of TE combining intellectual rigour, spiritual maturity and commitment
 - *authenticity* of TE involving critical encounter with each cultural context in the design, purpose and shape of theological education
 - *creativity* of TE, understood as promoting new approaches of the churches obedience in mission.
- Three Mandate periods of TEF:
- - Mandate period 1958-1965: emphasis on indigenous and interdenominational places and institutions for theological education in the South
- - Mandate period 1965-1970: emphasis on new curricula developments for the churches of the South and new teaching materials written by leading theologians from the South
- - Mandate period 1970 to1977: critique over against western concepts of theological education and major calls for contextualization of both forms of ministry and forms of theological education in the South.
- 1969 establishment of an office for Education in WCC after Uppsala focus on liberating patterns of education (Paulo Freire, Ernst Lange, Ivan Illich)
- 1971 integration of World Council of Christian Education into WCC
- 1977 formation of the PTE-program of WCC (Samuel Amirtham from TTS Madurai)
- 1992 formation of ETE-progam

Changes in the landscape of global Christianity since 1910

- Growth of Christian churches in the Southern hemisphere
- De-colonialization and growing independence of churches in the South
- Formation of regional ecumenical organizations in the South
- Shift of the center of gravity of Christianity to the global South
- loss of credibility and self-confidence of western Christendom after two world wars
- Emergence of independent institutions of theological education in countries of the South
- Pluralization of Christianity and ongoing denominational fragmentation
- Emergence of new churches and Christian movements beyond the historical mission churches
- Pluralization of major ecumenical players in the ecumenical movement (WCC not any more being the only player)
- Emergence of a movement for a „wider ecumenism“ due to interfaith-realities in Asia which moves beyond some of the forms of historical ecumenism
- Increasing need to re-formulate a common understanding of mission and priority mandates for theological education for Christianity in the 21st century



The project of the centenary conference 2010

- **Vision:**

- The forthcoming Centenary of the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh 1910 is proving to be a suggestive moment for many people who are seeking direction for Christian mission in the 21st century. Several different constituencies within World Christianity have begun to plan significant events in 2010. Since 2005 an international group has worked collaboratively under the aegis of Edinburgh 2010. This intercontinental and multi-denominational project, now known as EDINBURGH 2010, is based at New College, Edinburgh, and headed by an International Director, Dr Daryl Balia.

- **Governance:**

- It is governed by a 20 member General Council with representatives of the majority Christian families, composed of 20 people representing the following member organizations:

- (a) major groupings planning international missional events around 2010;
- (b) church associations involved in common missional conferences around 2010;
- (c) global mission networks;



The project of the centenary conference 2010

Goals:

Churches will be provided with an **opportunity to celebrate** what God has done in the growth of the Church worldwide over the past century and to prayerfully commit to God the witness of the churches in the 21st Century

- The **biblical call to mission** will be affirmed and articulated within our contemporary contexts with particular focus on the meaning of evangelization and relevance of Christian witness today
- A key **conversation on mission** will be initiated with mission leaders from the older mission movements of the North and the new mission movements from the South and East, with dialogues held among representatives of different Christian traditions
- **Guidelines** will be developed and studies published to help church and mission leaders evaluate for their own situation models of mission which are proving effective elsewhere
- Based on a **critical assessment** of the status of the world, a new vision of God's purposes for creation in Christ and a **renewed spirituality and mission ethos** will be developed in the life of the churches worldwide.
- Centenary celebrations of mission in humility and hope will be held throughout the world with the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh, again, being the venue from **2- 6 June 2010 for the historic celebration involving over 700 delegates.**



Themes of the global Edinburgh 2010 study processes

- THE 2010 MISSION THEMES
- Essential to the work of the Edinburgh 1910 Conference, and of abiding value, were the findings of the eight think-tanks or 'commissions'. These have inspired the idea of a new round of collaborative reflection – but focussed on the themes identified as being key to mission in the 21st century. A small but widely representative consultation held in Edinburgh in June 2005 identified key themes and these were further developed in subsequent rounds of email discussion.
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- 1) - [Foundations for Mission](#)
- 2) - [Christian mission among Other Faiths](#)
- 3) - [Mission and Post-modernity](#)
- 4) - [Mission and Power](#)
- 5) - [Forms of missionary engagement](#)
- 6) - [Theological education and formation](#)
- 7) - [Christian communities in contemporary contexts](#)
- 8) - [Mission and unity – ecclesiology and mission](#)
- 9) - [Mission spirituality and authentic discipleship](#)
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- TRANSVERSALS
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- - Women and Mission
- - Youth and Mission
- - Healing and Reconciliation
- - Bible and Mission
- - Contextualization
- - Subaltern Voices
- - Ecological Insights

Edinburgh 2010 – international study group on theological education

- Global challenges for theological education today:
- a) There are still *grave discrepancies in the availability and accessibility of higher theological education* in many countries with fast growing churches
- b) interdenominational colleges and centers of excellency in theological education have more *difficulties to become financially self-reliant and viable* than ever before;
- c) there is a *mushrooming of new colleges and bible schools* in many regions many of which have no experience or connection to the global Christian family;
- d) many churches as well as funding organizations in developmental work still do not give *proper priority importance to theological education* in their budget plans;
- e) the *international lobby for promoting and funding programs of theological education has remained or become small in many churches, networks, funding agencies or in interdenominational and ecumenical organizations*;
- f) globalization of economy and the continuous *brain drain of highly trained theologians from countries of the South to countries of the North* deepen the problem of glaring discrepancies in the availability of proper expert and library resources for theological education;
- g) rapidly changing political scenarios on national and global level and increasing tensions between Christianity and other world religions demand for *much higher commitment to interreligious dialogue (particularly of Christian-Muslim dialogue) and expertise in new frontier issues of ethics* (bio-ethics, ecological ethics, sexuality ethics and communication ethics) than most of the curriculum plans of institutions of theological education prepare for;
- h) the *resurgence of fundamentalism and confessionalism* as counter-movements to the pressures of globalization demand for an even deeper commitment for mutual dialogue, cooperation and interdenominational unity by all participants in theological education – despite the dwindling of funds and financial resources.

Edinburgh 2010 – international study group on theological education

- Goals for the study group on theological education:
- a) to analyze major global challenges and trends in theological formation and education on a global scale today;
- b) to provide one major historical study on how theological education in churches particularly of the southern hemisphere emerged and was shaped during the past 100 years of the missionary movement;
- c) to consider preparing some short regional surveys on the actual stage of theological education in five different regions (Asia, Africa, Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America);
- d) to outline some basic theological foundations for the interrelation between theological formation, mission and the commitment to church unity of the universal church in the broadest sense of these terms;
- e) to describe some key insights of relevant new (missionary) renewal movements for theological education in its different forms;
- f) to define some overarching key goals for developing and nurturing theological education and the viability of institutions of theological education in the 21st century;
- g) to propose some key actions or new models of cooperation for mechanisms of global solidarity of theological education for the Edinburgh 2010 follow-up process between the different “families” acting more or less separately in the area of theological education until today (ecumenical, evangelical, Pentecostal);

Projects of the international study group on theological education

- 1) Summary study report paper to be available by September 2009 on the future of theological education in the 21st century
- 2) Global Handbook on Theological education
- 3) Regional TE-Resource Books for Teaching Ecumenism



Outline of Summary Study Report Paper I

- Edinburgh 2010 – international study group on theological education
- summary study report paper
- Tentative working draft
- Bossey 3rd December 2008
- I) Foundations and Clarifications
- 1) Missionary training and theological education in Edinburgh 1910 and major achievements since then – historical review
- 2) Theological education and ministerial formation – clarification of terms
- 3) Theological education and christian mission – biblical and missiological insights
- 4) Theological education and the church – a relationship of service, ownership and critical distance
- 5) Theological education and different understandings of the Bible – re-reading the Bible today, importance of Biblical hermeneutics in TE
- 6) Theological education and the unity of the church – interdenominational cooperation and ecumenical learning in TE
- 7) Diversity in theological education and the different forms of ministry in the church
- 8) Theological education and a missionary spirituality – spiritual formation in TE
- 9) Women in theological education and new approaches in women's theological networks

Outline of Summary Study Report Paper II

- **II) Contexts and Case Studies**
- **10) Interdenominational institutions of theological education – United Theological colleges – promises or failures?**
- **11) Theological training programs for migrant churches (Queens Foundation and others)**
- **12) Short term mission training programs (CWM and others)**
- **13) Reconstructing churches by reconstructing theological education – a case study on TE in China**
- **14) Fragmentation and pluralization in TE – a case study on TE in Myanmar**
- **15) New accreditation criteria and the quality of TE – a case study on TE in South Africa and in other contexts**
- **16) Pentecostalism and TE – a case study on the interrelation between pentecostal movement, theological education and the ecumenical movement**
- **17) The role of regional centers of excellence in theological research and studies – a case study of SEAGST program**
- **18) Structural divides and potentials for cooperation in networks of TE – a case study on the interrelation between BTESSC and ATA (ecumenical and evangelical associations)**

Outline of Summary Study Report Paper III

- III) Affirmations and Recommendations
- 19) On TE and mission education
- 20) On different structural settings and models for TE (church semionaries, private bible schools, state theological faculties...)
- 21) On the churches support and ownership for institutions of theological education
- 22) On global solidarity in theological education
- 23) On innovative models of traning for (cross-cultural) mission and intercultural formation
- 24) On interfaith-learning in theological education
- 25) On the unity of the church in theological education
- 26) On new models of online-education and e-learning in theological education
- 27) On financial viability and global financial support for theological education

- IV) Concluding service part
- 28) Selected new websites of important networks of theological education
- 29) Selected bibliography on global theological education
- 30) Major regional associations of theological education

Edinburgh 2010 process and theological education - the legacy of the world mission conference and the vision for ETE in future

(B)

Edinburgh 1910 and the understanding of „ecumenical“ in subsequent decades of the WCC



Starting questions – what is „ecumenical“?

- Is „ecumenism“ on cooperation between protestants and catholics?
- Is „ecumenism“ on the unity of the church?
- Is „ecumenism“ on the wholeness of humankind?
- Is „ecumenism“ on the merging of all world religions?
- Is „ecumenism“ an anti-christian concept and a threat to true Christian faith?



„Ecumenism“ – origins in ancient Greek

- The origin of the English word ecumenical is the ancient Greek *oikoumene*. The root of this word is *oikos*, a house, and its original meaning relates to those who live together in a household. By a process of extension it came to refer to the whole inhabited earth. This is a similar journey to that undertaken by another word coming from the root of *oikos*, economy, which began as the management of the household.
- The New Testament uses the word *oikoumene* (*oikoumenh*) in the sense of the whole inhabited earth in several places. To give some well known examples:
- In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world (*oikoumenh*) should be registered. (Luke 2.1 NRSV)
- Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world (*oikoumenhz*). (Luke 4.5 NRSV)
- And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world (*oikoumenh*), as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come. (Matt 24.14 NRSV)

„Ecumenical“ as used for the first councils of the Ancient Church

- The word “ecumenical” acquired its ecclesiastical connotations through the name being applied to the early councils of the church from the Council of Nicea in 325.
- Although it can be argued that these councils contained a variety of practice and belief, the term ecumenical was applied because they brought together representatives of Christian communities from around the then known world.
- A council called by the Roman emperor was de facto an authoritative body. The word ecumenical when applied to Nicea and subsequent councils became associated with that which is authoritative and valid throughout the whole church.
- An ecumenical council becomes understood as a body which speaks on behalf of the whole church.



Use of the term “Ecumenical” in the early history of the ecumenical movement

- The 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference, from which the modern ecumenical movement is often dated, was entitled *Third Ecumenical Missionary Conference* in its early planning stages. The ecumenical description was dropped because neither the Roman Catholic or Orthodox churches would be present and that it was a deliberative rather than legislative event.
- At the conference that constituted the Evangelical Alliance in 1846, several speakers used the word ecumenical in *the sense of common belonging and attitude* rather than in the traditional sense.
- Henri Dunant, remarkable founder of the Red Cross in 1863 and a pioneer of the YMCA, constantly stressed the need for an “ecumenical spirit”, defining “ecumenical” as:
- “that Christians of different denominations can and must unite in love, associate with each other, and work together in charity for the glory of God, while maintaining their individual liberty and even their right to defend, if necessary, but with tolerance and charity, their personal points of view and their particular religious convictions.”

Use of the term “Ecumenical” in the early history of the ecumenical movement

- **Faith and Order Movement:**
Emphasis on the visible unity of the church
- **Life and Work Movement:**
Emphasis on the wholeness, peace and reconciliation, of the human family
- **Missionary Movement:**
Emphasis on the holistic mission of the church in the world

Comment of Stephen Neill (reviewing the history of the ecumenical movement up to 1948) :

“One of the chief problems in the ecumenical movement in the mid-20th-century was that occasioned by the separation between its two essential components. This history has shown at point after point the intimate connection between the missionary work of the church and the ecumenical ideal. Throughout the world, ecumenical has been used to designate the efforts of Christians to seek and promote unity but it should now be plain to the reader that these efforts are not an end in themselves. The aim of Christian union is that the world may believe.”

Key-working definitions of „ecumenical“ from the WCC

- Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Rolle, 1951:

“It is important to insist that this word which comes from the Greek word for the whole inhabited earth, is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole church to bring the Gospel to the whole world. It therefore covers equally the missionary movement and the movement towards unity, and must not be used to describe the latter in contradistinction to the former. We believe that a real service will be rendered to true thinking on these subjects in the churches if we so use this word that covers both unity and mission in the context of the whole world.”

- WCC Assembly, New Delhi, 1961:

“We believe that the unity which is both God’s will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.”

„Ecumenical learning“ to become the „oikos“ of God in the midst of the „oikumene“

- Philip Potter addressing the **Central Committee in 1977**:

“The whole burden of the ecumenical movement is to co-operate with God in making the oikoumene an oikos, a home, a family of men and women, of young and old, of varied gifts, cultures, possibilities, where openness, trust, love and justice reign”(1)

- Philip Potter addressing the **Vancouver Assembly in 1983**, drawing on the image of living stones being built into a spiritual house in 1 Peter 2:

“But becoming living stones means that believers and communities of believers do not remain isolated, alone, petrified, dead. They are made alive and are being built into a house, an oikos which is enlivened by the spirit. Christ is the cornerstone, and the spirit enables those who come to Christ to be built into this house...

The ecumenical movement is, therefore, the means by which the churches which form the house, the oikos of God are seeking so to live and witness before all peoples that the whole oikoumene may become the oikos of God through the crucified and risen Christ in the power of the life-giving spirit.”

The fellowship of churches within the WCC therefore is a community of ecumenical learning about what it means to be the one learning community of confessing, learning, participation, sharing, healing, reconciliation, unity and expectancy.(2)

- [1] Philip Potter, One Obedience to the Whole Gospel, in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol 24, No 4, October 1977 p303
- [2] Philip Potter, A House of Living Stones, in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol 35, No 4 October 1983 pp352 & 354

Asian accents in understanding ecumenism

- Different historical contexts for the development of the ecumenical movement in the West and in Asia:
- A) **Western countries**: the shock of aggressive nationalism, destructive politicization of Christianity and the rediscovery of liberating internationalism and the interdenominational unity of the churches – emphasis on ecclesial and social ecumenism
- B) **Asian countries**: the emergence of a liberating nationalism over against western domination and imperialism; rediscovery of the unity of the whole people – emphasis on people's ecumenism and interfaith ecumenism, wider ecumenism
- Examples for Asian accents on a wider ecumenism:
- 1) **Stanley J Samartha**:
- “With a broadening awareness of the world perspective of religious pluralism today and with several world organisations seeking a greater measure of corporation the time has come to search for a new style of ecumenism encompassing the whole of humanity, but which recognises within itself the creative particularities of pluralism.(Stanley J Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue, Ecumenical Issues in Inter-religious relationships*, Geneva, WCC, 1981 p343
- 2) **Raymondo Panikkar**:
- Calling the traditional understanding of ecumenism ‘Christian ecumenism’ and looking for an ‘ecumenical ecumenism’, Panikkar comments: Christian ecumenism if it is really to be ecumenical cannot be reduced to settling Christian family feuds as if it were for healing old wounds. It has also to take into account of the entire world situation and find a place of religions of the world in this without a priori subordination of other religions to the Christian self-understanding (Raymondo Panikkar, ‘Towards an Ecumenical Ecumenism’, in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Fall, 1982 pp764f)
- 3) **Ahn Jae Woong**, GS of Christian Conference of Asia: international symposium in 2002 on the theme of the new ecumenism.
- “I prefer to emphasise this wider meaning through three coined words – *theo-ecumenics*, *eco-ecumenics* and *geo-ecumenics*. By *theo-ecumenics* I mean that our ecumenical mission should have a theocentric emphasis on God the source and creator, protector and liberator of the world. By *eco-ecumenics* I mean that our ecumenical mission should be eco-friendly and must involve the whole of God's creation. By *geo-ecumenics* I mean that our ecumenical task should be geo-contextual - where Asia's unique plurality of religions, cultures, races, languages, a peoples, creeds, and colours are affirmed and help to flourish”

Asian accents in understanding ecumenism – historical backgrounds

- **1900** Madras: First Asian regional mission conference: example for Edinburgh
- **1907** WSCF conference in Tokyo – first international ecumenical conference to be held in the « East » ('orientation' of the federation) (627 participants)
- **1910** Edinburgh world missions conference: famous speech of V.S. Azarajah of India, « the first shot in the campaign against missionary imperialism » (1200 delegates, 17 of the South)
- Asian national YMCA conferences (e.g. China, Shanghai **1913**)
- WSCF international Asian conference in Peking **1922**: need for indigenous and self-propagating churches in Asia
- **1928** IMC Conference Jerusalem: relation between older and younger churches
- **1933** Asiatic Asia WSCF conference in Java (Indonesia): critique of western imperialism and loyalty of Christians to the newly emerging Asian nations
- **1938**: Tambaram IMC conference: the Christian message and its relation to people of other faiths
- **1955**: Bandung (Indonesia): first international conference of independent nations of Asia and Africa
- **1957**: Parapat: First conference of East Asian Christian Conference (EACC): Christians in Asia are no longer mission fields and objects of Western mission bodies, but they stand together for their own witness in Asia: The birth of Asian ecumenism
- **Key point:** Often the western missionary movement is depicted as the driving force behind the emergence of the modern ecumenical movement. But the unique and early contributions of Asian Christians towards forming the ecumenical movement – out of protest against western domination and out of faithfulness to the call for the unity of the church – is often neglected and sidelined. The Asian contribution towards modern ecumenism needs to be highlighted and rewritten in detail

Asian accents in understanding ecumenism

- Classical vision for Asian ecumenism:
- „First, ecumenism is churches in mutual dialogue with Christ. Asian ecumenism should be understood essentially as the conversation of the churches in Asia among themselves and with the non-Asian churches in Christ. This interchurch dialogue is necessary for mutual correction and for a common discrimination of the Word of God from human words. Second, ecumenism is liberation of the churches from an idolatrous attachment to outdated values and patterns of life which are passing away. For Asia it means freeing the churches from the legacy of Western Christendom, which was transferred to Asia in the period of western expansion inaugurated by Vasco da Gama. The end of these patterns in the relationship of church to state, society, culture, and religions must become the hour of spiritual liberation of the Asian churches from the idols of that epoch. Third, the spiritual liberation from the bygone world and its idols is liberation for a new Christ centered involvement in the Asian world, with a view to its renewal of Christ. In the Bible, freedom in Christ is to be available for the work of Christ in the world“

• (Visser't Hooft, Ecumenical vision for the Asian Churches, in his 1959 John R. Mott lectures, quoted in: M.M. Thomas: Ecumenism in Asia: An Assessment, also in: Ninan Koshy, Hist. Of the Ec. Movement in Asia Vol,1, 32)

For comparison: African accents in understanding ecumenism

- For comparison: All Africa Conference of Churches has the following description of the rationale of ecumenism:
- “The primary underlying theological principle of ecumenism is that the entire human race bears the same origin and we are children of the same parent-God, who at the end of time will be drawn into union with God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To pray and address God: “Our Father” has a great ecumenical significance, an ecumenical significance beyond the unity of the denominations of the Christian Church to that of the unity of humankind. The word oikoumene is related to another Greek word ‘oikos’, which means ‘household’. Under the Father/Parent, we are one family belonging to his household. Therefore no one should be classified a foreigner because we are children of the same Parent/God. The world is a global village and the dynamics of the ecumenical movement aims at the recognition of that fact.”



For comparison: Orthodox accents in understanding ecumenism

- Orthodox Churches historically are not closed in principle towards ecumenism but have a significant contribution to the ecumenical movement from early years onwards:
- Encyclica of the Ecumenical Patriarchate 1902:

“This holy Church is indeed one in identity of faith and similarity of manners and customs, in unison with the decisions of the seven Ecumenical Councils, and she must be one and not many, differing from each other in dogmas and fundamental institutions of ecclesiastical government. If, as in every matter which is impossible with men but possible with God, we cannot yet hope for the union of all as ever being a possibility, yet because divine grace is constantly active and men are being guided in parts of evangelical love and peace, one must consider very carefully whether it might be possible to prepare the (at present) anomalous way which leads to such a goal and to find points of the encounter and contact, or even to turn a blind eye to certain irregularities until the completion in due course of a whole task, whereby might be fulfilled to our joint satisfaction and benefit of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ’s saying about one flock and one shepherd.
- Encyclica of the Ecumenical Patriarchate 1920: An Ecumenical Council as similar to the League of Nations:

“Our own church holds that a rapprochement between the various Christian Churches and fellowship between them is not excluded by the doctrinal differences which exist between them. In our opinion such a rapprochement is highly desirable and necessary. ... even if in this case, owing to antiquated prejudices, practices or pretensions, the difficulties which have so often jeopardised attempts the reunion in the past may arise or be brought up, nevertheless, in our view, since we are concerned at this initial stage only with contacts and rapprochement, at these difficulties are of less importance. If there is goodwill and intention, they cannot and should not create an invincible and insuperable obstacle.

Roman Catholic accents in understanding ecumenism

- Second Vatican Council, Encyclica *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Restoration of Unity) in 1964 [1] .
- “Every renewal of the Church is essentially grounded in an increase of fidelity to her own calling. Undoubtedly this is the basis of the movement toward unity...”
- This movement toward unity is called "ecumenical." Those belong to it who invoke the Triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Savior, doing this not merely as individuals but also as corporate bodies. ...
- Today, in many parts of the world, under the inspiring grace of the Holy Spirit, many efforts are being made in prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires. The Sacred Council exhorts all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism.
- The term "ecumenical movement" indicates the initiatives and activities planned and undertaken, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote Christian unity. These are: first, every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult; then, "dialogue" between competent experts from different Churches and Communities. At these meetings, which are organized in a religious spirit, each explains the teaching of his Communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features. In such dialogue, everyone gains a truer knowledge and more just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both Communions. In addition, the way is prepared for cooperation between them in the duties for the common good of humanity which are demanded by every Christian conscience; and, wherever this is allowed, there is prayer in common. Finally, all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and accordingly to undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform.”

[1] http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html

Recent WCC definitions and visions for ecumenism

- World Council of Churches - Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches (CUV, 1998).
- **"2.2 Among churches and ecumenical organizations uncertainty, ambiguity and even confusion prevail about what is meant by the "ecumenical movement". There is agreement that the term "ecumenical" embraces the quest for Christian unity, common witness in the worldwide task of mission and evangelism, and commitment to diakonia and to the promotion of justice and peace. But there is no authoritative definition of the term, and it is in fact used to characterize a wide range of activities, ideas and organizational arrangements....**
- **2.6 More recently, a growing number of voices from the churches, especially in Asia but also in Latin America, have spoken of the need for a "wider ecumenism" or "macro-ecumenism" - an understanding which would open the ecumenical movement to other religious and cultural traditions beyond the Christian community. ...**
- **2.8. In the present situation of uncertainty and transition, the ambiguities surrounding the meaning of the term "ecumenical" will not be resolved by a descriptive - even less a normative - definition which identifies a particular model, strategy or organizational affiliation as criteria for what is "ecumenical". Any common understanding will have to embrace multiple perspectives and a diversity of subjects. Nevertheless, a number of basic distinctions may help to clarify the use of the term here:**
- **2.8.1 The dynamic of the ecumenical movement is rooted in the tension between the churches as they are and the true koinonia with the triune God and among one another which is their calling and God's gift.**
- **2.8.2 The ecumenical vision encompasses the renewal of church and world in the light of the gospel of God's kingdom. In the face of all threats to life it affirms the Christian hope of life for all**
- **2.8.3 The ecumenical movement, while it shares in other efforts at international, inter-cultural, and interreligious cooperation and dialogue, is rooted in the life of the Christian churches. Yet it is not limited to the concern for inter-church relationships and is wider than the various organizations in which it has found expression.**
- **2.8.4 The ecumenical movement seeks to foster cooperation and sharing, common witness and common action by the churches and their members. More specifically, however, it is a renewal movement in and through the churches which has found expression in diverse initiatives and networks among lay people, especially women and youth. It is committed to the search for visible unity, not as an end in itself but in order to give credible witness "so that the world may believe" and to serve the healing of the human community and the wholeness of God's entire creation.**
- **2.8.5 While the ecumenical movement has a worldwide scope - in line with the original use of the word oikoumene for "the whole inhabited earth - it points more specifically to the catholicity of the church, that is, globally. In each place and in all places, the ecumenical movement is concerned with the true**

Two different concepts of „wider ecumenism“

- Approach in Global Christian Forum (Nairobi 2007):
- Widening the framework of the historical ecumenical movement by inviting those churches and renewal movements which are still beyond the constituency of WCC (e.g. Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Instituted Churches)
- Some Asian concepts:
Widening the framework of contextual ecumenism in the Asian constituency by emphasizing the solidarity with all God's people (humankind) including those of other faiths working for justice and peace

Edinburgh 2010 process and theological education - the legacy of the world mission conference and the vision for ETE in future

(C)

**Dimensions of Ecumenical Formation in
Theological Education
An Introduction**



Ecumenical Formation in Theological Education

- I) ***Four Key Questions*** (*survey from WCC-CC 2005*):
 - 1) “*What is your own definition of ‘ecumenical formation’?*”
 - 2) “*What experiences (activities, encounters, events, involvements, courses, relationships etc.) have been most significant in your own personal ecumenical development ?*”
 - 3) “*How has membership of Central Committee influenced your own ecumenical commitment?*”
 - 4) “*Does the WCC need to offer opportunities for ecumenical formation to members of the next Central Committee? If so, what would be most useful for them?*”.

Ecumenical Formation in Theological Education

- 1) ***“What is your own definition of ‘ecumenical formation’?”***
 - - ecumenical formation as a verb suggests that we are involved in and have responsibility of shaping opportunity for the Church to experience its unity
 - - becoming committed to develop the visible unity of the Church in every way possible in your situation
 - - growing consciousness of being part of the world wide church of Jesus Christ; getting aware of the necessity of visible unity to be credible in our witnessing to the world.
 - - coming to understand the ecumenical movement, its history, theological and biblical foundations, goals, major issues eg unity and diversity
 - - the education of the clergy and laity into the history, culture and ethos of the ecumenical movement
 - - growth of ecumenical awareness; knowledge of people of other churches
 - - to pass on the knowledge about other churches
- 2) ***“What experiences (activities, encounters, events, involvements, courses, relationships etc.) have been most significant in your own personal ecumenical development ?”***
 - - Personal relationships and encounters with individuals and groups of other “church” or “faith” expressions; working together where that is possible
 - - local ‘mission’ (in widest sense!) carried out riskily, experimentally, by group of lay-people from different traditions
 - - local partnerships, prayer groups and study groups
 - - discovering common ground through shared commitment in worship in ecumenical conferences and meetings.
- 3) ***“How has membership of Central Committee influenced your own ecumenical commitment?”***
 - - my understanding about the ecumenical movement, ecumenical work and ecumenical development and challenges is deepening and broadening.
 - - in a more responsible commitment to communicate to my local church all implications, values and accountability that is inherent to being part of the ecumenical movement.
 - - my commitment (to the churches in my country) has strengthened: no discrimination, each church is important and I’m a “living letter” for them.
- 4) ***“Does the WCC need to offer opportunities for ecumenical formation to members of the next Central Committee? If so, what would be most useful for them?”***
 - preparation, orientation, engagement and involvement in ecumenical formation are essential

Foundation for ecumenical formation in the basis of WCC

- The basis of the WCC affirms:
- “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”
- In the constitution of WCC the concern for ecumenical theological education therefore receives a high priority: It is defined as one of the primary purposes and functions of the WCC to *“nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context”*(WCC constitution par III). The ecumenical movement from its very beginning and even before the founding of the WCC 1948 (comp. history of World Council of Christian Education) had a profound impact on the understanding of Christian education in general and ministerial formation for future ministers and priests in particular.



What is ecumenical formation?

- **Ecumenical formation is: (where would you put your preferences?)**
- A) learning about the development of the ecumenical movement
- B) learning about the achievements of the ecumenical movement
- C) learning about the structures of the ecumenical movement
- D) learning focussed on issues which affect peoples lives
- E) learning about different church traditions
- F) learning from people who are different from myself
- G) learning to work together
- H) learning to pray together
- I) changing our attitudes towards one another
- J) changing the way we behave
- K) changing what we believe
- L) developing relationships
- M) creating new knowledge
- N) producing new ecumenical leaders



Ecumenical Formation should be the responsibility of (?)

- A) churches at the national level
- B) churches at the local level
- C) seminaries/theological colleges
- D) university theological faculties/departments
- E) ecumenical institutes eg Bossey
- F) national councils of churches
- G) local/neighbourhood councils of churches
- H) regional ecumenical organisations
- I) Christian world communions
- K) World Council of Churches



Why is ecumenical formation needed in theological education today?

- **1) The unity of the worldwide church:**

We are confessing the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in our creed. Ecumenical Formation is a direct consequence of this affirmation which needs to be unfolded in detail for all those working for the church.

- **2) Relevance of the local ecumenical context:**

Many pastors work in ecumenical settings without knowing too much about their own context and its history. Ecumenical formation tries to analyse and to perceive the richness and plurality of traditions in one's own social and religious context.

- **3) The future of the ecumenical movement and its leadership development:**

There is no future for the ecumenical movement as a whole if there is no commitment to ecumenical formation processes in formal and non-formal theological education programmes of WCC member churches. If theological education fails to be guided by an ecumenical vision of a church renewed in mission and service to the whole of humankind there will be a serious shortage in terms of a new generation of Christian leaders, pastors and theological teachers carrying on the ecumenical vision and commitment into the 21st century and a widening gap and estrangement between the majority clergy and ever fewer experts on the ecumenical movement and ecumenical theological discourse which can already be observed in a number of member churches.

- **4) A holistic mission to the world:**

A holistic mission of the church to the world demands commitment to the ecumenical formation of its future pastors and laity.

- **5) Practical imperative for theological educators:**

The emphasize on interdenominational cooperation and ecumenical orientation in theological education as well as the development of proper teaching materials on ecumenism remains an indispensable and in many places still lacking component of the theological education of pastors and ministers.

6 Dimensions of Ecumenical Formation in TE: Contextualization and Inter-Contextualization

- **Vision:** Ecumenical formation in theological education is guided by the vision of the church truly united and serving the renewal of the human community. Therefore, ecumenical formation reaches beyond the realm of issues of inner church unity in addressing fundamental questions of the human family and the survival of the whole earth.
- **Contextuality:** Being inspired by the ecumenical vision of God as the owner of the whole earth (oikumene) as well as the eschatological vision of a new heaven and a new earth, theological education in ecumenical understanding will always try to respond to the pressing needs of social contexts and to be related to issues of human survival both in global and in local environments.
-
- **Intercontextuality:** Different parts of the one universal church can assist each other in reading their own contexts with different eyes, enriching particular contexts with experiences from a different setting and trying to build an intercontextual network of ecumenical learning
- **Liberative methodology:** Contextualization of theological education with regard to the realities of particular social and cultural context always has a liberating impact as it transcends our perceptions from any captivity of the church in certain social milieus, cultural one-sidedness and spiritual blindness to religious values and theological challenges existing outside our normal range of communication and perception.

PTE/ETE-program of the WCC has assisted processes of ecumenical learning in theological education which answer to newly emerging needs and challenges beyond the traditional arena since several decades (HIV/AIDS curriculum, doing theology from disability perspective, feminist theologies, theology from the perspective of marginalized groups)

6 Dimensions of ecumenical formation in TE: Participation of the whole people of God

- **Theological education for the whole people of God**
- rediscovery of the importance of the laity and their missionary role in church and society (Evanston Assembly 1954);
- rediscovery of the comprehensive character of the ministry of the whole people of God, to which all are called who have received baptism.
- Developing multiple forms of ministries of and in the Christian community - theological education broader than ministerial formation, understood as a particular expression and a specific part of the more comprehensive task of equipping the whole people of God for the.
- New forms of lay theological formation, non-residential forms of theological education (TEE and diversified theological education): (*missionary or participatory dimension of ecumenical formation in theological education*).

6 Dimensions of ecumenical formation in TE: Rediscovering the ecumenicity of the Church

- **1) The universal church as horizon:**
 - No church is for itself the whole church. Each local church participates in the community of the church universal
- **2) Discovering the treasures and variety of christian denominations:**
 - We cannot understand the reality of ecumenism if we do not develop a sense of appreciation for the treasures and rich variety of christian churches from different parts of church history
- **3) Understanding the interaction between local churches, regional churches and ecumenical bodies**

To rediscover in what ways each local church participates in, learns from and contributes to the one universal church in the body of Christ is to unfold the ecumenicity of the church
- **4) Celebrating the unity of Christian churches in liturgical life and worship**



6 Dimensions of ecumenical formation in TE: Interfaith dialogue

1) The vision of interfaith dialogue:

- Ecumenical formation in theological education is guided by a vision of sharing and mutual discoveries reaching beyond the realm of Christianity to the human community in the whole inhabited earth (oikumene).

2) Dialogue as related to local contexts of lived interreligious communities:

- Interfaith Learning in ecumenical formation should take into account the challenges of Christians living in close neighbourhoods and experiencing mutual sharing and solidarity with people of other faith traditions in different church contexts.

3) Interest in joint action:

Interfaith encounter in theological learning is interested to explore what can be affirmed in common action for peace, justice and human dignity with people of other living faith traditions.

4) Interfaith encounter as strengthening Christian identity:

Interfaith dialogue is an integral component of ecumenical formation which is not endangering one's own Christian identity but rather deepening it in processes of communication and sharing with people of different faiths.

- With the recent Letter of some 140 Muslim Leaders ("A Common Word between Us and You,") to Leaders of Christian Churches around the world at the feast of "Eid al-Fitr al-Mubarak" 2007, which marks the end of Ramadan, and the answer from WCC this whole dimension again becomes an urgent priority also for institutions of theological education.

6 Dimensions of ecumenical formation in TE: spiritual formation

- **Spiritual formation in theological education**
- Very often ecumenical formation processes have been described as having a profound spiritual basis and character referring back to the very biblical understanding as the church as learning community (*spiritual dimension of ecumenical formation*).
- “Learning in the Bible is a process by which people relate to God and God’s way of truth, righteousness and peace, that they may in obedience practice that way in relation to each other and extending to the nations...Learning does not simply mean acquiring knowledge or skills, or being intellectually equipped, or just memorizing some catechism of faith. Rather it means so entering with our whole being and with all the people into a relationship with God through God’s self-revelation, that our horizons are widened and our wills are strengthened to be right with God and with one another in word and deed”(Philip Potter in Vancouver 1983).
- If ecumenical formation is about becoming open and responsive to the will of God in the whole of our own existence, ecumenical formation is not just a cheap way of adding some additional pieces of information to the theological curriculum, but involves a certain aspect of deep and spiritual conversion and metanoia in the understanding of both one’s own Christian existence as well as one’s own confessional identity, a conversion from denominational self-centredness and cultural captivities to the realities of God’s mission in the whole of the inhabited earth.

6 Dimensions of ecumenical formation in TE: informed participation in ecumenism

- **ecumenical formation as informed participation in the ecumenical movement**
- There also is a certain methodological principle at work in the understanding of ecumenical formation which is due to the appropriation and integration of much of the didactical and catechetical revolutions and fundamental paradigm changes occurring in the ‚pedagogy of the oppressed‘, methods of conscientization and the methods of learning by involvement in common action which have come up strongly in the ecumenical debate of learning during the 70’s and 80’s (*didactical, practical or liberational dimension in ecumenical formation in theological education*).
- Already in the early and first statement of WCC in 1957 on ecumenical education the emphasize was put on concrete practical involvement as a prerogative of proper ecumenical learning: „Ecumenical education can no longer be limited to the history of attempts to reunite churches or the growth of ecumenical organizations. Ecumenical education essentially means fostering understanding of, commitment to and informed participation in this whole ecumenical process“ (Central Committee 1957).
- Ecumenical formation is not possible without a didactical and pedagogical approach which fosters practical involvement in both local, regional and global projects of ecumenical cooperation and human struggles for dignity, reconciliation and social justice.

Ecumenical formation in TE: a summary

- Vancouver Assembly in 1983:
- Ecumenical learning both in theological education as well as in Christian education as whole is characterised by the following essential marks, that
 - „a) it *transcends barriers* – of origin and biography, individual as well as community limitations, because it responds to the exhortation of the word of God and the far-reaching horizons of God's promise
 - b) it is *action-oriented*, not satisfied with information but seeking to enable Christians to act in order to learn, to be right with God and with one another, in word and deed
 - c) it is *done in community*, in which people are asked to establish relationships with one another and also with those who are far away and with what is unfamiliar
 - d) it means *learning together*, detecting the global in the local, the unfamiliar in the context of one's own environment, in order to become aware of one's own limited horizons and implications
 - e) it is *inter-cultural*, promoting the encounter of different cultures, traditions and forms of life because only a widening of perspectives will bring about experiences of the riches in creation in nature, in history and culture
 - f) it is a *total process, social and religious learning are not separated from each other but constitute a unity*“.

Ecumenical Learning in different theological disciplines

- **Key insight:** Ecumenical Theological education is a fundamental chance and challenge for all disciplines of theology, though it can be appropriate to also offer a distinct course on Ecumenics (and mission / or interfaith dialogue) as part of the degree program
- Contributions of different disciplines to ecumenical theological education (examples):
 - 1) **Biblical Studies:**
 - - Bible translations as an ecumenical universe
 - - different (cultural/denominational) approaches to Biblical hermeneutics
 - - the relation between the people of God and the people of all nations in OT and NT
 - 2) **Church History:**
 - - history of the great schisms in World Christianity
 - - History of the ecumenical movement
 - - Origins and beginning of a truly ecumenical church history
 - 3) **Systematic Theology**
 - - concepts and foundations of church unity
 - - concepts of ecumenical social ethics
 - - Christologies in different church and social contexts
 - 4) **Pastoral Theology**
 - - pastoral issues of inter-denominational marriages and interfaith marriages
 - - intercultural counselling
 - - christian healing in ecumenical perspective

Good Practise Guides in ecumenical learning

Ideas to help us learn together more effectively

- Introduction
-
- The **Good Practice Guides in Ecumenical Learning** are designed to offer simple, accessible advice on effective ecumenical learning.
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- The World Council of Churches Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation has expressed a concern about the uncreative educational process that can be found in many places in the churches and ecumenical movement. The **Good Practice Guides** are one way for us to encourage one another in developing effective learning processes.
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- The **Good Practice Guides** have been written out of the experience of various educators in the ecumenical movement. We will be adding to the series over the coming years and refining the content of existing guides. We hope that you will give us the necessary feedback so that the guides can become increasingly useful in developing good practice.
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General Principles

- Beginning where we are
- Fully involved
- Speaking for ourselves
- Creating the right environment
- High expectations
- Good Practice Guides Editor: Simon Oxley Consultant Editor: Christy Lohr

Specific Methodologies

- 21. Faith based debates
- 22. Brainstorming
- 23. Simulations and role plays

Teaching Ecumenism in Asia

- **Some selected bibliographical sources**
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 - Samuel Hugh Mofett, A History of Christianity in Asia, Harper Collins 1992
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 - Samuel Amirtham/Cyrus Moon: The Teaching of Ecumenics, WCC Publications, Geneva 1987
 - Wati Longchar, Joseph Widyatmadja, M.P. Joseph (eds.), They Left by Another Road. Rerouting Mission and Ecumenism in Asia, 1957-2007, CCA 2007
 - James Massey (ed): Ecumenism in India today. A Search for a relevant ecclesiology and churches and theological education in India, BTESSC, Bangalore 2008
 - Michael Kinnamon, Ecumenical Key Texts....



Teaching Ecumenism in Asia

- Towards a core curriculum on teaching Ecumenics in Asian contexts
- Possible elements
 - 1) Introduction
 - - sharing our ecumenical journeys
 - - sharing different understandings about the concept of « ecumenical »
 - 2) Clarification of terms
 - - historical and biblical roots of the concept of « ecumenical »
 - - Asian accents in interpreting the term « ecumenical »
 - 3) historical stages in the development of the ecumenical movement in
 - Asia
 - - Early phase of Asian Ecumenism (before 1957)
 - - Organized phase of Asian ecumenism (after 1957)
 - 4) Models of church unity in the Asian context
 - - history of the Church of South India Union movement
 - 5) Mission and Colonialism, Ecumenism and Nationalism in Asian context
 - 6) Institutional shapes of Asian Ecumenism (CCA; YMCA, WSCF)
 - 7) Interfaith Contexts and the Asian concept of a « wider ecumenism »
 - 8) Globalization and the Asian ecumenical movement
 - 9) Elements of an Ecumenical Spirituality in Asian contexts
 - 10) Different local forms of ecumenical action and commitment

ETE-Presentation ended



Group of Nepalese students of theology, Kathmandu, April 2008